The Top Runners' Quarterly

Newsletter of The Top Runners' Conference, The Official **Netrunner**® Players' Organization

Volume 3, Issue 2 — Second Quarter, 1999

www.cyberjunkie.com/trc, www.geocities.com/sunsetstrip/basement/9666

World Domination 1999: Dreff's Revenge

by Lukas Kautzsch

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The qualification stage is over: A total of 184 players showed up in 25 World Domination Qualifier events from March 12th to April 25th, leading to 42 qualified players in addition to the 19 prequalified ones (top places from last year's World Domination and National/Regional championships). Of these players, 21 come from the United States, 15 from Germany, 6 from the UK, 4 each from France, Canada, and Brazil, 2 each from Belgium and Switzerland, and 1 each from the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand.

There will be 7 World Domination round 1 tournaments:

1. Marshak's House of Fantasy, Fort Collins, Colorado, **U.S.A.**, Tel. (970) 224-3599, on **June 12th**, at 10:30 am. Organizer: Tobin Lopes (reigning world champion), Tel. (970) 407-9223.
2. PTV-Haus, Stumpfstr. 1, Karlsruhe, **Germany**, Tel. +49 (0)721-9651-428, on **June 19th**, at 12:00 noon. Organizer: Lukas Kautzsch, Tel. +49 (0)721-616815 or -9651-304.
3. "Sinéad's Ireland" pub, Vrij Enterpot, Kop van Zuid, Rotterdam, **The Netherlands**, on **June 27th**, at 12:00 noon. Organizer: Arjaan Den Ouden, Tel. +31 (0)10-485 45 94. This event will be a "double header" yielding two Finalists (because of the high number of participants).
4. New York City, **U.S.A.**, on **July 10th**. Organizer: Tim Guillette, Emory Street, Brockton, MA 02301, U.S.A.
5. Seattle, Washington, **U.S.A.**, on **July 18th**. Organizer: Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, c/o WotC US <gadget@wizards.com>.
6. **IRC America**, starting on **July 19th**. Organizer: Tim Guillette (see above).
7. **IRC Europe**, starting on **July 19th**. Organizer: Lukas Kautzsch (see above).

Only the winner from each WD round 1 tournament (except Rotterdam) will advance to the WD Finals (runner-up taking his or her place if necessary). The WD '99 Finals will take place on IRC, in late July/August.

The basic format for all WD round 1 events will be Sealed Deck: one starter, one regular and one Proteus booster. The Finals will include an additional Unlimited Constructed tournament. All tournaments will use scoring by GMP and Swiss Pairing (where round-robin is not feasible).

Nonqualified players may play in side events where available (ask the organizer): In Rotterdam there are open tourneys scheduled for Saturday (June 26th) and Sunday, in Karlsruhe for Saturday (June 19th).

The official rules for WD '99 as well as a list of all registered tournaments and results can be found at the WD '99 homepage:

http://web.system.ptv.de/lk/nr/wd99.htm

State of the Corp—June 1999

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes

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There's little to report on the new cards front, I'm afraid. The **Pokémon**® madness has knocked all the other card games off balance a bit, though things are calming down now and real work can begin. It will probably mean the cards come out quite late, perhaps not until the end of the year. You can be sure I'll let everyone know whenever I have news.

However, Wizards of the Coast is supporting the first official US **Netrunner** Nationals! The tournament will be held at GEN CON® in Milwaukee, WI, on the weekend of August 5–8, under the auspices of the TRC's own Scott Dickie. Organizing this year's event ran into some snags, but space and advertising has been set aside, and I have assurances from the Events department that the TRC will be brought into the planning much earlier next year.

As I write this, the first playoff round of World Domination is set to begin. I somehow managed to qualify in Doug Kaufman's tournament, so I'll be going up against a bunch of people who are way better than me! I'm holding the West Coast US round but haven't yet decided if I'll travel to Denver to play. I'd better not keep winning or someone will suspect the fix is in. ☺

Have a great summer, and keep the flame burning!

Gridlock 3 Committee Reporting

by Tobin Lopes

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The TRC is proud to announce that we have finalized some decisions around Gridlock Weekend 3. The momentous weekend will be in November 1999; its format will most likely be a draft. That is all that we can say for sure right now. Stay tuned to the TRC homepage and the server lists for more information.

Gridlock Weekend 3 committee
Tobin Lopes, chair.

"Elementary, My Dear Wilson!"
Famous Netrunner Stacks
#3: "Classic" Tag 'n' Bag

by Jens Kreutzer (with input by Scott Dickie)
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Disregarding high-powered descendents like Byron Massey's "Greyhound Demolition Derby," the "classic" Tag 'n' Bag deck doesn't find its way into tournaments very often anymore. Still, it belongs in a discussion of famous **Netrunner** stacks, since it is a strategy that was there right from the beginning, and one that Runners must always at least take into account while designing their stacks. It took only a couple of days from the release of **Netrunner** v1.0 for players to post the first mention of the strategy to the Netrunner-L newsgroup, and in *The Duelist*® #10 (May 1996), Tom Wylie hinted that such a deck had already been built during WotC playtesting. He also coined the name of the strategy, back then known as "Tag 'Em and Bag 'Em," also dubbed "Tag 'n 'S(ch)lag" by some players (after a preferred component they were using in their decks).

Universally known and rather obvious, the "Tag 'n' Bag" strategy uses card combos that tag the Runner and then deal lethal amounts of meat damage during the Corp's turn, so that the Runner has no chance of removing the tag beforehand. Ideally, this is quick and ruthless, the classic combination being Chance Observation followed by Urban Renewal on turn two—which works only if the Runner has four or less cards in hand, of course, and can be baited into running. Another duo with a heavy punch (though costly) is playing Manhunt for six tags, then installing and using Schlaghund for 10 meat damage. Other cards fitting the theme on the tagging side include Audit of Call Records, Trojan Horse, TRAP!, City Surveillance, Blood Cat and—since the advent of *Proteus*™—Data Sifters and Underworld Mole, as well as Scorched Earth, Punitive Counterstrike and I Got a Rock on the bagging side.

Complementing this core of the deck, the Corp player also needs bit-gainer cards (operations or nodes) and some ice, though less than in most other Corp decks—after all, the Corp wants the Runner to run! Ice that suggests itself is anything that traces and tags the Runner, like Fetch 4.0.1, Hunting Pack, Hunter, Data Raven or Pocket Virtual Reality. Agendas require a difficult decision. On the one hand, cards like On-Call Solo Team, Corporate Headhunters, Marked Accounts, Netwatch Operations Office or even Bioweapons Engineering seem to fit perfectly into a Tag 'n' Bag deck. But you'll need to score them, and with this deck's thin ice, you also need fast-advancement cards like Management Shake-Up to do it. Thus, while using Tag 'n' Bag agendas in such a deck is a viable possibility, all of this takes up a lot of space in the deck: it's difficult to cram everything in, and the fast-advancement operations soak up bits that should power Manhunts instead. Besides, though the agenda abilities are permanent, the corresponding nodes and operations often do a better job.

Another interesting approach (if a risky one) is to focus on the theme of the deck, which wins by actively working to flatline the Runner, not by scoring agenda points. To best minimize the percentage of agenda cards (and the chance of the Runner snatching them) in the deck, include just three Political Overthrows in a 45-card deck; the Runner would have to score two of them to win. This strategy was first formulated by David Mar (May 1996) and Scott Dickie and has been picked up quickly by others. The danger is that the Corp is usually unable to win by scoring agendas, since slow-advancing a Political Overthrow takes four turns; they serve only as bait and hopefully won't show up during the game.

Thus, when you play dedicated Tag 'n' Bag, you'd better keep your fingers crossed that the Runner won't smell the burning fuse and simply refuse to run; if that happens, the Corp will eventually lose through R&D depletion. Bluffing is of the essence here, feigning consternation at not drawing any ice in the first turn—all the while fondling Manhunt, Urban Renewal and Punitive Counterstrike in HQ. All you need to do is get your bit pool up to 11 bits in your first turn.

The following deck is but one example of the Tag 'n' Bag strategy, using David's Political Overthrow philosophy, and is very straightforward in its aims: if it doesn't win by turn two or three, it probably won't win at all. Including four Project Consultants also makes an agenda victory possible as a last resort (you'd need to scare the Runner into not running for one turn, and have 25 bits available).

3	**Political Overthrow**
10	**Accounts Receivable**
9	**Urban Renewal**
8	**Punitive Counterstrike**
9	**Manhunt**
2	**Blood Cat**
4	**Data Sifters**

Such a focused deck always has a weak spot, and in the case of Tag 'n' Bag, it is very pronounced. Wise Runners take precautions against tags and meat damage, using cards like Nasuko Cycle, Fall Guy, Armored Fridge or a base link—or all of the above, maybe with hand-size increasers to boot. An assertive Corp can sometimes breach defenses like Full-Body Conversion or Dermatech Bodyplating after a drawn-out battle, but worse news for Tag 'n' Bag decks are Arasaka Owns You, Identity Donor, and Emergency Self-Construct.

Against the first, which is especially devastating to Schlaghund and I Got a Rock, only Urban/Punitive (in that order, when the Runner holds five cards) or a surgically precise, repeatable source of meat damage like On-Call Solo Team stand a chance: If Arasaka Owns You is the last card the Runner has, then 1 more meat damage won't flatline him or her, but does take care of Arasaka, clearing the way for the next (and final) point of damage. Against Emergency Self-Construct, there is no hope whatsoever (apart from including a strategy for trashing programs).

Plus, as soon as the Runner sees an Urban Renewal in HQ or R&D, he or she will be very reluctant to take risks and will probably always keep a full hand, making life even harder for the Corporation. Since the Runner cards mentioned above can utterly thwart a pure Tag 'n' Bag strategy, it isn't employed that often in Constructed tourneys anymore (but can be good for a surprise). This is a pity, because Tag 'n' Bag leaves room for many deck variants (not all as rare-heavy as the example given above), including the use of Dedicated Response Team, Closed Accounts, Omniscience Foundation, or even Crybaby (ask Stephen Holodinsky). An alternative is to include just a few select Tag 'n' Bag cards in a Corp stack that's otherwise following a different strategy. This opens up an additional avenue to victory and keeps the Runner honest, while being much more flexible than a "classic" Tag 'n' Bag deck.

Did You Know?
Bits and Pieces from the NR Trivia Collection
#3: Braindance Campaign

by Jens Kreutzer
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A staple and well-liked bit-gainer node, at least in Sealed play, Braindance Campaign also features stunning artwork by Heather Hudson, which creatively captures the concept behind the card. But though it metaphorically portrays the effects of prolonged braindance exposure on the brain in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, it doesn't exactly tell you what braindance is supposed to *refer to.* To find out, you must turn to R. Talsorian's **Cyberpunk 2020™** roleplaying game, which provided the background story for **Netrunner**.

In the sourcebook *Rockerboy*™ (p. 62), the concept is explained: "The braindance is similar in nature to the netrunner's interface, in that it allows, via neural transmission, a person to fully and realistically experience an alternate reality. Unlike the interface a netrunner uses, the perceptions are not created from the user's brain, but rather from the recorded thoughts, memories and physical sensations of another person. Originally developed as a method of aversion programming for convicted criminals, and later as a military simulator, the braindance is fast becoming the most popular form of entertainment in today's media-oriented society. Several companies, including DMS [...], have many employees whose sole purpose is to go out and get involved in situations that normal people only dream of."

Incidentally, if you want an excellent demonstration of the braindance, look no further than to the SF/cyberpunk movie *Strange Days* (directed by Kathryn Bigelow). Braindance—and its possible dangers—is really what this film is all about (even though they don't call it that). Don't miss out on it.

What hasn't been addressed so far, however, is the card's flavor text. The evil idea to infiltrate braindance with subliminal messages also comes from *Rockerboy* (p. 65): "Another common fear associated with the braindance was that of subliminal suggestion. When [it] became available to the public, there was a rumor spread that people's personalities were being altered, or even overridden by the braindance. It was soon discovered that there were several black market chips that were doing just that. The person would jack into the program and find themselves as a netrunner, just as his personality gets overwritten by a Liche program. The Liche programming was strong enough to actually overwrite the person, even though they were receiving the programming from a source other than the Net." The flavor text seems to imply that corporate methods of subliminal influence are much more subtle nowadays. Therefore, Runners, watch out when you hit a Braindance Campaign the next time. A Liche may not be too far away.

Networking the Center
TRC Membership Directorate Status Report: June '99

by Stephen Holodinsky
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It's been a busy first seven months over here in the Membership Directorate (MemDir). After a short period of getting comfortable and strategic planning, we undertook the first census of TRC members in the first quarter of this year. The response from this has been promising and, although not complete at this time, we are still receiving replies from various sources. During this time, the MemDir has taken the opportunity to do some restructuring of personnel and responsibilities. While this is still ongoing to some extent, the results so far have been encouraging. In addition to this, the Membership Secretary, Dave Nolan, is in the midst of automating many of the day-to-day processes that affect the TRC in general and the MemDir in particular. When this process is complete, we should be even better equipped to serve the TRC membership and expand on our present player base.

What about our player base? This, of course, is the most important aspect of the MemDir, and is the primary reason it exists. Well, the TRC MemDir is happy to report a steady growth throughout this restructuring with 25 new City Grids reporting in, including first cells in Denmark, Slovakia, and Spain, as well as additional representation in Germany, Japan, Canada, and, of course, the U.S.

What are our plans for the future? Presently, the MemDir is consolidating various player data-bases and filtering them through the TRC census data. When this task is completed, we will have an enlarged database of players from which we will be recruiting in the third quarter of this year. Additionally, this issue of the Top Runners' Quarterly features a complete listing of SysOps and Regional AIs of the TRC, as well as their email addresses and telephone numbers in some cases (see below). We are hopeful that the distribution of this in hard copy will raise the profile of the TRC, and hence, aid in the expansion of the **Netrunner** player base.

What can you do to help? That is quite easy. The next time you go out of town, take a few copies of the TRQ with you. Drop in on the local gamestore whereever you may be and leave them at the counter. Who knows, by doing so you could be starting a new TRC cell.

Yours, Stephen Holodinsky,
TRC Membership Director.

TRC Executive Registry
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